

THE JOHNSON WAY: VICTORY THROUGH CONSENSUS

By TOM WICKER

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 17

Were the Republican party given to iambic pentameter, it would want these days only some lean and hungry Cassius to whisper to some unsettled Brutus:

"Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world

Like a Colossus, and we petty men

Walk under his huge legs, and peep about

To find ourselves dishonorable graves."

And as 'twas asked in ancient Rome, so it might be wondered now:

"In the names of all the gods at once,

Upon what meat doth this our Caesar feed

That he is grown so great?"

Just three months after the inauguration of Lyndon B. Johnson for a full term of his own, it really does seem sometimes that Washington's "wide walls encompassed but one man," just as Rome's in the day of Caesar. To shift the idiom to Texas, the President is in tall cotton and eating high on the hog.

Like Old Man River, his legislative program just keeps rolling along. Education, with its great potential for a divisive church-state uproar, has been passed in peace. Medical care for the aged is over the ancient hurdle of the House of Representatives. Despite dispute on details, the prospect is for passage without filibuster of the major bill on voting rights. Beyond that unfolds the prospect of one of the most extensive records of legislative achievement in any session of Congress.

Blissful Scene

Elsewhere in the nation, Mr. Johnson surveys a blissful scene—save for the uncertain prospect of a troubled summer of racial unrest. The Republican party lies in tatters at his feet, still riven on ideology and without a natural leader. Mr. Johnson's business support also appears to be holding firm. Public opinion polls show his popularity at a high level, and private polls indicate legislative successes are laying the

groundwork for successful Democratic campaigns in the 1966 Congressional elections.

Even in his own Administration, the gaps have been filled. A series of major appointments, coming slowly but meeting a high degree of public approval, have recast the Kennedy Administration into the Johnson Administration with little break in continuity and no apparent party resentments.

These appointments have brought Secretary of Commerce John T. Connor, Secretary of the Treasury Henry H. Fowler, Attorney General Nicholas deB. Katzenbach and Under Secretary of State Thomas C. Mann into positions of new influence. The appointment this week of Admiral William F. Raborn to head the Central Intel-

ligence Agency not only met with Congressional approval but also may bring a new effectiveness to that controversial organization.

Mr. Johnson still has a number of appointments to make—notably of ambassadors—but he has filled out the major offices and staffed the regulatory agencies with generally impressive men. His White House staff appears to have become an effective unit, and Administration sources say the talent hunt headed by Civil Service Director John Macy is going well.

Abroad, the scene is less encouraging, but except in Vietnam, scarcely alarming. The Western alliance is badly in need of repair, but the task probably cannot be undertaken now in any case, with uncertain Governments in Britain and West Germany, and an all-too-certain Government in France. Major advances in Soviet-American relations can hardly be effected until the new Soviet Government establishes its positions more clearly and while Vietnam is in crisis.

There is plenty of potential trouble in the Middle East and with some of the fierier "uncommitted" nations like Indonesia. The Congo and Cyprus crises continue. But to offset these problems, the Alli-

ance for Progress apparently is having greater effect in Latin America.

None of Mr. Johnson's various foreign entanglements seem to threaten him with extensive trouble at home, except Vietnam. Even on that explosive issue, Mr. Johnson has managed to put together an uneasy consensus of support, particularly since his offer to negotiate. But there is little room for maneuver. The Republicans in Congress have made it plain that they will attack anything they construe as "retreat" in Southeast Asia. Yet, a shooting war on the Asian mainland would probably be unpopular and would put a sharp ceiling on Mr. Johnson's ambitious domestic program.

Trouble Spots

Vietnam alone, in short, seems at the moment seriously to threaten Mr. Johnson's standing as an American colossus. But there are other situations that offer varying degrees of potential trouble, for instance:

(1) The Economy. Inflationary possibilities abound. In particular, a steel wage settlement and a steel price rise beyond the Administration's guidelines would confront Mr. Johnson with hard political

choices that could hurt his position with labor or business, or both.

(2) Poverty. Increasing evidence of confused administration and political influences in the poverty program has caught Congressional attention. A major scandal or a Congressional crackdown would reflect sharply on Mr. Johnson's most publicized program.

(3) Labor. The unions are demanding both an increase in the minimum wage and the repeal of a Taft-Hartley law provision permitting state right-to-work laws. Both issues are politically explosive and could put Mr. Johnson in the position of having to offend either labor or business supporters.

But Washington is getting accustomed to the sight of Lyndon Johnson picking his way, unscratched, through thorny thickets like these. And there is not much doubt about what meat this Caesar feeds on. It is politics—a mastery of the art so sensitive as to make a radar antenna seem obsolete.

The uneasy left wing of his own party has been stilled with performance—the school bill, medical care and the compelling speech on voting rights during the Selma crisis. The business community, always suspicious of Democratic

Continued

CPYRGHT

Presidents, has been brought around by the emphasis on economy, by such appointments as those of Mr. Connor and Mr. Fowler, by the tax cut and its accompanying rhetoric about economic growth and free enterprise and by such astute exercises as the "voluntary" program to right the imbalance of payments. The Republicans, reduced nearly to impotence by the disastrous campaign of Barry Goldwater, have scarcely found an opening.

Opposition Stifled

The best features of a Republican medical care plan were absorbed into the Democratic bill. First-year appropriation requests for the major Johnson program have been kept low enough to muffle Republican cries of pain. On the other hand, the support of old Republican heads like Senator Everett McKinley Dirksen of Illinois and Representative William McCulloch of Ohio has been assiduously sought on and fulsomely praised in the crucial voting rights situation. This week, that noble Republican name, Henry Cabot Lodge, was dispatched abroad again, not least to add a little bipartisan gloss to the war in Vietnam.

Mr. Johnson never ceases in his

pursuit of rapport with any group or individual whose backing or friendship might be useful. Nearly every member of Congress has been entertained at the White House and massaged by the Presidential grip. Majors, Governors, teachers, religious leaders, business executives, newspapermen—all have heard the President expound on everything from the balance of payments to Vietnam. Wednesday he made a flying trip to disaster-stricken areas of the Midwest—not to bring anything tangible to the unfortunate, but to demonstrate his sympathy and interest and that of the Administration.

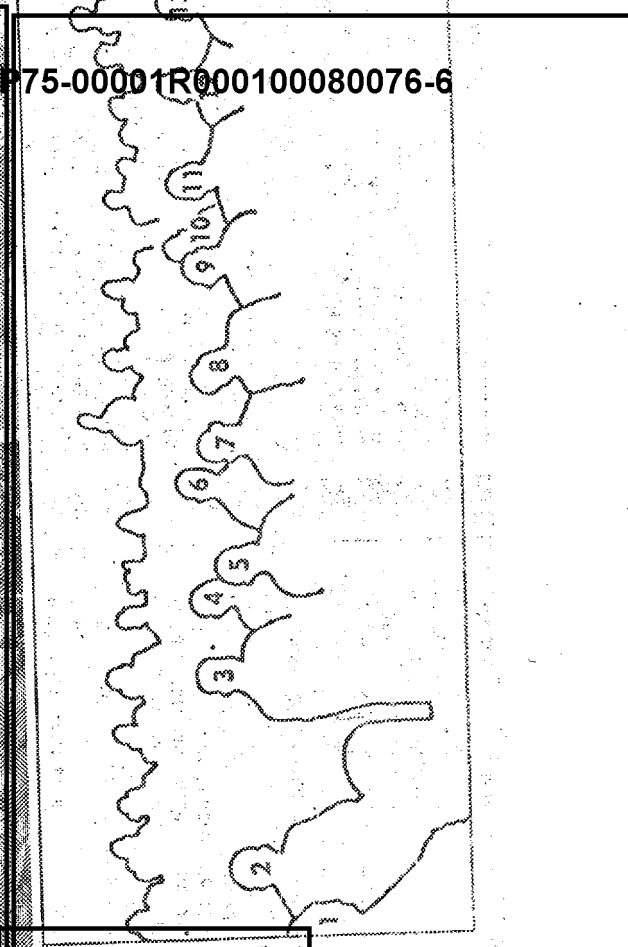
That is why few observers here believe Mr. Johnson is likely to

begin fumbling and stumbling, no matter what misfortunes befall. No small part of his success so far has been due to circumstances beyond his own efforts—the national prosperity he inherited, for instance; and the opportunity to run against Mr. Goldwater. Even so, Lyndon Johnson has given ample proof that he is no longer just a political accident in the White House. He knows what he is doing, and how to do it, as few Presidents have.

It would be no wonder if some frustrated opponents, unlike the lean and hungry Cassius, became convinced that the fault for their circumstances lay not in themselves but in their stars.

APR 18 1965

CPYRIGHT



The New York Times (the United States)
President Kennedy (2), Senator McCarthy (3), Representative Landrum of Georgia (4), Senator Morse of Oregon (5), Representative Read of New York (6), Representative Perkins of Kentucky (7), Representative Powell of New York (8), Senator Ribicoff of Connecticut (9), Senator Long of Louisiana (10), Senator McNamara of Michigan (11), Senator Randolph of West Virginia (12), Senator Kennedy of New York (13).

PRESIDENTIAL THANKS: President Johnson held White House reception last week to thank Congressional leaders and others for their support in passing the aid to education bill. He is shown here at a meeting in the East Room where he announced his plans for conferences on education and other matters to be held at the White House later in the year. Among those present were: Welfare Secretary Celebrezze (1), A.F.L.-C.I.O.